

Women Construction Workers in Odisha

POLICY BRIEF

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Nirmanshree

Empowering Women through Social Enterprise



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Abstract

Women in the construction sector work face gender discrimination, irregular and seasonal employment, sexual harassment, abuse in the workplace, lack of growth opportunities, poor environmental conditions resulting in poor health, lesser access to social security schemes, and lack of bargaining power. This policy brief discusses these challenges in-depth and offers policy recommendations to address the challenges. These policy solutions include upgrading of skills, certification of women construction workers to match the demand of the job market, diversification and expansion of gender-sensitive housing-related activities, provision of unemployment allowance during the lean season, protection of women workers' rights, security and safety through effective enforcement of stringent labour laws, severe and timely punishment of harassment and atrocity against women at the workplace, legislation for higher participation of women masons in government construction sites, reformulation of special and specific benefit packages like wage compensation and health/medical support during pregnancy and after delivery, enrolment of children in nearby Anganwadi Centre, interest free credit link and subsidy to women to construct their own houses, creating awareness among the spouses for their skill upgradation and entitlement, the convergence of multi-departments multi-sector and multi-stakeholders activities, etc. This policy brief also strongly recommends for creation and promotion of '**Women's Collectives**' as a panacea to address any and many of the problems of women construction workers.

1. Introduction

The issue of women's participation in the construction sector is a complex and multi-faceted challenge that involves addressing gender-based discrimination, improving working conditions, and promoting equal opportunities for women in the workplace. Despite progress in many other sectors, women's representation in the construction industry remains low, with a significant gender pay gap and a lack of protective policies and resources. This not only limits the potential of women to contribute to the growth of the construction sector but also perpetuates gender inequality in the workplace.

While the construction sector in India remains to be male-dominated, there is a significant number of women participating in the sector. The national (India) average is 4.84% and top five States¹ average is 5.56% but the State of Odisha represents the highest participation of females in the construction sector which is 13.8%². With many restricted livelihood options, women get temporary engagements in this sector. The sector has also been treating women with a lot of discrimination. While male construction workers get paid more, assured wage and employment, recognition and opportunities for training for skill upgradation and career growth, unfortunately, women do not have access to any of these. Contrary to such preferences to males, women work hard and for long hours with less wage, no gender specific basic amenities (like separate toilets or changing rooms), no job as well as social/ physical security and even with no scope or hope for skill upgradation and better service conditions. Reports, on women being physically, mentally, and sexually exploited and abused, are not new or even few.

The involvement of women in any construction related project cycle is high, though not acknowledged or admitted. Women's voices are hardly heard as they work under the male workforce in the workplace. In the current world of visibility and publicity, women's contribution is neither visible nor audible. Women's silent contribution to the design and implementation of socially and environmentally sustainable, resilient,

¹ Top five states by female participation are Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Telangana

² Odisha Economic Survey 2021-22

and inclusive development of the construction sector is enormous. Her involvement and contribution lead to (a) safety and accountability, (b) integration with innovation and technology (c) design and development of environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient solutions, (d) socially inclusive as well as diversity for children, elderly and the person with a disability, etc.

A few strategic interventions of the Government of Odisha, especially through Mission Shakti, have not only started breaking the culture of silence of the women in Odisha, but also initiated the process to ensure their political engagement even at the household/ community level in taking decisions for their well-being. Various steps have been taken to ensure women's social security through institutional safety nets. The construction workers' welfare board is just another such effort.

2. Present Study

Habitat for Humanity India (HfHI) has conducted this evidence-based exploratory study for initiating policy dialogues on the status of women workers in construction sector. Working in isolation, in construction sector, is an illusion. Each step and process in this sector is interdependent. There are multiple intermediaries too. Multiple stakeholders/ players are involved in the construction sector. This evidence-based study has aimed at exploring the perspectives of various stakeholders in the sector. In the process, the study has also collected, consulted, and compiled existing schemes, programmes and policies for women workers in the unorganized sector in general and women construction workers in particular. It has also mapped gaps in those policy documents.

2.1 Objectives of the study

- To map the problems/ difficulties, vulnerabilities and occupational hazards/constraints of women construction workers
- To explore and analyse various factors that lead to gender discrimination in construction space
- To map various stakeholders (government, associations and other institutions) and their potential role and responsibilities and make them critically aware of the policy gaps related to women in the construction sector.
- To suggest measures that would benefit women construction workers in the State.

2.2 Study area

The national and state level secondary data was collected, compiled, and analysed whereas primary research was conducted in Dhenkanal and Jajpur districts of Odisha to supplement and complement each data set. Quite a lot of subjective issues, which are otherwise not noticed through quantitative statistical analysis, also surfaced, and are captured in the study.

2.3 Methodology

The mixed-method research study approach has been adopted. It has also given due importance or weight-age to the qualitative/subjective concerns that affect objectively to the women's well-being. While review of literature, situation and vulnerability analysis of women construction workers, review of existing schemes, programs, policies and laws, etc. were done with primary and secondary data for quantitative analysis, consultations with various stakeholders, relevant Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises as part of the rigorous field works with focus group discussions and individual interviews with construction workers were done for qualitative research works. This has enabled to collect their views, opinions, impressions, perceptions and concerns. Their concerns were examined critically under the existing policies. Triangulation was also done for improving the quality and authenticity of

data. Recommendations are suggested based on a series of serious consultations with the women construction workers, implementing agencies, government officials, policymakers, and analysing the feasibility within the existing policies frameworks or possibilities of convergence and coordination with others.

3. Review of Literature

An attempt has been made to study and review the conditions of women workers in unorganized sectors in general and women construction workers in particular. However, research studies on challenges faced by women construction workers are very few. Issues including gender discrimination, irregular and seasonal employment, sexual harassment and abuse at the workplace, lack of growth opportunities, etc. are observed to be the major concerns.

Inter and intra-sectoral heterogeneity among agriculture, construction and domestic workers is required in ensuring their employment security. Location specific policies should be formulated as different occupational groups face different problems.³

Women construction workers face harassment at both home and workplace. They do the heaviest work. Training for women as masons may equalize their opportunities.⁴

Problems of migrated construction workers are many. Poor health conditions, arduous working life, harassment, inadequate and unequal wage structure, long working hours, poor housing facilities, atrocities on women workers, lack of safety measures and improper and inadequate education facilities for children of construction workers, etc. are some of the major concerns. Creation of awareness of labour rights among the construction workers and proper implementation of labour law are recommended to ease out some of those problems.⁵

Disparity in wages (female workers being paid less), no fixed working hours and harassment of female construction workers at workplace were common in unorganized sector.⁶

Women work as unskilled labour and face several other difficulties in comparison to males. Sexual harassment, gender biases, wage discrimination, and no skill upgradation even after working for long (many years) are major factors that add on to the drudgery and difficulties of female construction workers.⁷

Marginalization of women, illiterate and landless, and schedule caste construction workers in addition to issues of safety and security of young girls are evident in many cases and many forms.⁸

4. Situation Analysis of Women Construction Workers

Odisha has a higher percentage of construction workers, both male and female, in rural as well as in urban areas as compared with national average. While nearly more than twice i.e., 14.15 % of females in rural Odisha work in construction sector as against the corresponding national average i.e., 5.87%, their participation i.e., 16.55% in urban area is about four times more than the participation at national level i.e., 4.4%. Female workers represent more i.e., 16.55% in urban areas against 14.15% in rural areas, whereas higher percentage of male i.e., 25.33% work in construction sector in rural as compared to 16.75% in urban areas in Odisha.

³ J Y, Suchitra & Durgam, Rajasekhar. (2006). *One-size-does-not-fit-all: Employment insecurity of unorganised workers in Karnataka*. 49. 455-473.

⁴ Annette Barnabas & Joseph Anbarasu D. & Clifford Paul S., 2011. "Prospects of Women Construction Workers in Tamil Nadu, South India," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Centre for Women's Development Studies*, vol. 18(2), pages 217-235, June.

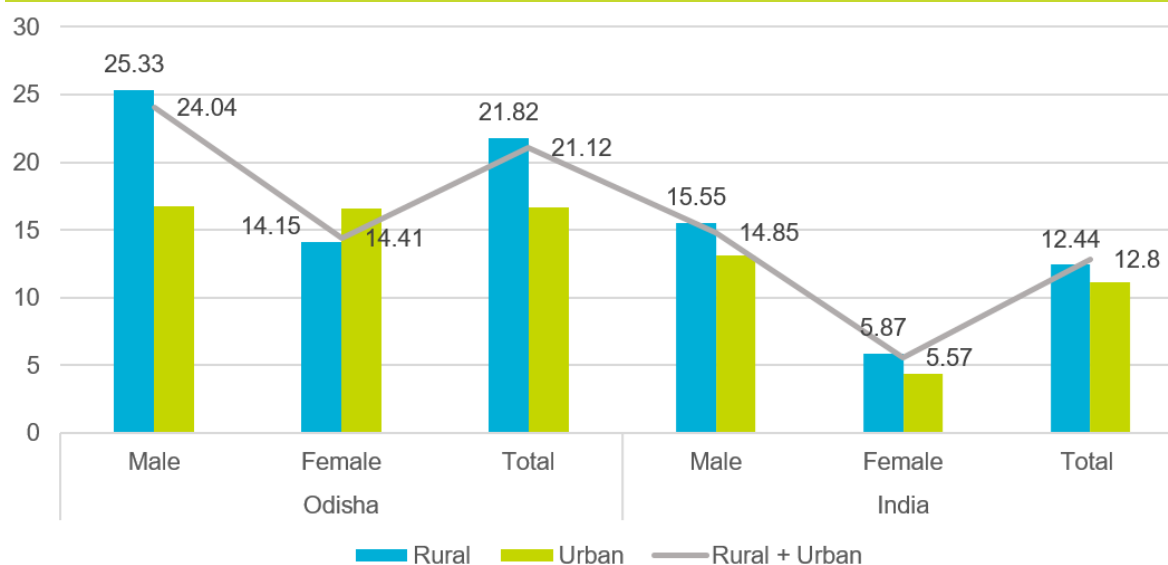
⁵ M., Dileep. (2013). *Inimitable Issues of Construction Workers: Case Study*. 42. 42 - 52.

⁶ Dave, Vandana. (2012). *Women Workers in Unorganised Sector*. Women's Studies Research Centre. Kurukshetra University. *WOMEN'S LINK*. 18(3).

⁷ Devi, Kalpana & Kiran, UV. (2013). *Status of female workers in construction industry: A review*. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 14. 27-30. 10.9790/1959-1442730.

⁸ Patel, Amrita & Giri, Jasmine. (2019). *Climate Change, Migration and Women: Analysing Construction Workers in Odisha*. *Social Change*. 49. 004908571882175. 10.1177/0049085718821756.

Percentage of Gender Segregated Construction Workers in Odisha and India



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2020-21

Gender discrimination in availing livelihood option in construction sector is evidently lower in urban areas as compared with rural areas. However, in both the cases, the situation in Odisha is far better as against the national scenario. Women's participation is 14.41% in Odisha against the national average of 5.57%⁹. This is a preliminary observation to drive down the point that women should not come to the job market at a disadvantageous position than men, though this demands deep research.

5. Vulnerability Analysis of Women in Construction Sector

As a part of the study, area-specific field work was conducted in Jajpur and Dhenkanal districts of Odisha (covered under Nirmanshree Project of Habitat India). A total of 8 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), 4 Case Studies and 12 Key Informant Interviews were conducted to study and analyse the status of women in construction sector in Odisha. The study has pre-defined target population that included beneficiaries, mostly women construction workers, of Nirmanshree project. It focused on the qualitative methods, of course, without ignoring the quantitative concern. It got the findings triangulated, reconciled and validated too through a small primary survey. Observations, Focused Group Discussions (FGD), interviews, PRA exercises, etc. were undertaken for collecting data. Purposive non-random sampling techniques was used. A brief schedule with simple questions relating to seasonality of availability of work, working conditions, health concerns, etc. was administered among 200 respondents. The schedule included a brief Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) study too to measure the gap, if any, on various social safety schemes/ issues. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the attitude especially on gender related issues. A control group from the nearby Block i.e., Rasulpur in Jajpur and Parajang in Dhenkanal district respectively (Blocks not covered under Nirmanshree Project of HfHI) with similar socio-economic profiles, have also been visited to quickly and briefly study, and to compare and contrast the impact/ differences/ changes, if any.

5.1 Availability of work - Seasonality

Seasonality plays a significant role in the job market for women in construction sector, rainy season being the worst. Women lag behind and get comparatively less percentage of works all through the

⁹ Odisha Economic Survey 2021-22

year. The gap between male and female, engaged in construction works in a month, ranges from 10 to 30%. Additionally, while male gets nearly 1/3rd, one in every five females gets engaged in construction related works during the lean season i.e., June to September. Engagement in agriculture sector is reported to be one of the major reasons of such low % of participation of such workers in construction sector. 65% women revealed that they face challenges to work in construction sites during monthly menstrual period and pregnancy.

5.2 Gender based different activities under construction work

A detailed flow chart of activities involved in major construction (housing) sector (i.e., the entire project cycle) revealed participation of women in hard and harsh works. Women are engaged more often in labour intensive works (80% and more - carrying heavy load of bricks and sand, mixing cement and sand, climbing higher altitude even when pregnant, watering/ curing, leveling the surface, etc). Extensive harder work like digging of soil is, of course, done by man. Women are also noticed to feel shy identifying themselves as 'Masons' which is reported to be a male dominated activity. Few (less than 20%) unskilled women are reported to be engaged in assisting the skilled male mason as helpers. Interestingly, 75% respondents including female consider that these works are for man and not for woman. Surprisingly, there is consensus among the respondents that men have to lead women. 65% women responded that man does not feel comfortable to work as supporting hand (helper) to a woman.

5.3 Advanced / associated activities relating to construction sector

No women construction worker reported to have worked as a plumber, carpenter, electrician or interior designer, even though a negligible percentage (4%) expressed their interest to do such works, if available, especially during the lean season. Not a single women construction worker was found to have been trained in either of the trade as mentioned above, whereas all such male workers (100%) i.e. plumbers, electricians, and carpenters were found to have been trained, mostly, under Government schemes (e.g. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Koushala Yojana - DDU GKY) and/or Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).

5.4 Working condition

The women construction workers live in poor working environment. Service conditions are also detrimental to women welfare. Not a single woman construction worker seemed to be feeling comfortable, safe, secured, and motivated with the existing working conditions/ environment. More than 70% women respondents felt that networking and dominance of male co-workers, non-existence of women supportive facilities like separate toilet, creche, accommodation, and rampant prevalence of gender-based discrimination, long hours of work, irregular and unstable earnings, etc. have been adding to their drudgery and demotivating them to pursue their livelihood choice in construction sector. Safety and security of women in workplace is not at all a priority. Problems of migrant women construction workers at unknown locations are even worse.

5.5 Health status

Women carrying heavy load of materials, covering long distance and climbing higher altitude, while a severely malnourished child being clipped to her back (in some cases), is a common scene in any construction site. Such physically strenuous job often causes injury/ harm to her. Long hours of stay away from family also affect mental health of women. Improper health care, inadequate rest, insufficient nutrition cause multiple health hazards to them. Women construction workers are noticed to be weak and anemic.

Most of the women construction workers are in reproductive age group. However, they do not get any benefits of leave or rest during menstruation, pregnancy, child birth and lactating. Almost all women (91%) respondents very strongly expressed their concern, discomfort and drudgery on the hard and harsh works specified to them in of construction space. Regular health checkup, provision of Nutrition and Health related education and supplementation of Iron Folic Acid (IFA) to pregnant and lactating women at the work site would help augmenting the efforts of Government in reducing malnutrition among mothers and children under its PoSHAN initiatives. 30% male construction workers are also reported to have been suffering from TB, gastro intestinal disorders, etc. for which their female family members have to put extra labour too. Provision of safe drinking water at work site is a basic need that the construction workers asked for.

5.6 Financial situation including wage rates

The gender disparity in wage rate is very much a reality in the study districts, Jajpur and Dhenkanal. The wage rates for men, as quoted, range from Rs 350/- to Rs 550/- per day; while for the women it is within Rs 200/- to Rs 300/- per day; almost half of what the man gets for undertaking same work. Women in Jajpur get comparatively more than their counterpart in Dhenkanal.

All figures are in Rs.

Type of work	Minimum wages in Odisha (w.e.f. October 2022)	Average wage rate of women in Dhenkanal	Average wage rate of women in Jajpur
Unskilled	326	245	268
Semi-skilled	366	278	312
Skilled/Clerical	416	322	345
Highly Skilled	476	365	410

Source: <https://labour.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-05/2433.pdf>

5.7 Violence at work site

Sexual exploitation and abuse take toll on the women construction workers, though the cases are under reported. Fear of losing the livelihood option, social stigma attached to such happenings, and lack of support system force them to continue with the sufferings. Important to mention here that Odisha recorded the fifth highest number of IPC crimes against women in 2021, after Uttar Pradesh (44,230), Rajasthan (40,056), West Bengal (33,247) and Maharashtra (33,182), Odisha registered as many as 27,792 cases.¹⁰

5.8 Bargaining power

Workers organization/ associations are often male dominated. Almost in all FGDs, it was found that women construction workers have no idea about any kind of association or unions. With scattered and scanty case load, small in size, absence of such platform and lack of collective confidence, they are subjected to discrimination, exploitation and ill-treatment by contractors and other co-workers. However, with the ever-expanding exposure and achievements of Women SHG movements in Odisha, experience of 'Women's Collectives' under 'Nirmanshree' Project and support from Mission Shakti Department, the scope of women construction workers to get united to form federations to fight for their rights has been discussed and recommended by many development players.

¹⁰ National Crime Record Bureau Report-2022

5.9 Double burden of work

Apart from the household activities, women engage herself in multiple tasks for managing the elderly as well as differently able family members along with her reproductive role and responsibilities in bearing, rearing and caring of child(ren). Additionally, with continuous breaking of families, now a days, sensible women are found to have been taking responsibilities of both in-laws as well as their own elderly parents' well-being. This adds on and doubles their burden of work.

5.10 Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study of Women Construction Workers

Nearly, every three out of four women respondents (73%) still believe that man should predominantly do the masonry works and women should only assist them. However, one in every five women construction workers disagrees to such limitations and prejudice. One in every two women construction workers (49%) agrees that man should get more wage. Women construction workers continue to have low self-esteem and highly dependent on the male counterparts.

Awareness level, of women construction workers on women's and workers' rights, is very low, even though there are many women supportive rules and regulations including Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PESA) at Work Place Act -2013 are in place. They feel ostracized, aloof, lonely and helpless while asking for their entitlements. Male workers do not support them, rather show supremacy.

Every second woman respondent opines that she should also have a say in the layout design of her house as she is the one who would spend more time in the household activities. This correlates to the fact that 47% of women, and 69% of men, in Odisha, own land alone or jointly, which is much higher than the national average that stands at 28% for women and 49% for men, as per National Family Health Survey - 2019-21 (NFHS -5). However, women respondents have hardly any idea of the (joint) - patta (land records). 90% women have revealed that their say, if any, does not bear any stand in (or influence) the decisions pertaining to housing and related activities at the household and community levels.

Despite having plethora of social safety net schemes, only 20% reported to have positive knowledge about those, and even fewer have fully access to all of their entitlements under such relevant schemes. However, 67% were found to be unaware of such schemes and programs of Government. Respondents in Jajpur are comparatively better aware than those in Dhenkanal.

The above issues, though not exhaustive, conclude that there exist significant gender inequalities among workers in the housing and construction sector. Such inequalities, obviously, adversely affect women. The list is long. However, to name a few, it includes barriers to owning land, insufficient engagement in decision making, low wages, lack of skills, lack of opportunities for skill upgradation, existing ambiguous and complex systems and protocols, etc. negatively affect women's capacities to have decent livelihoods opportunities in new and emerging job market.

6. Nirmanshree Project

Habitat for Humanity (HfH) India, in partnership with European Union, is implementing Nirmanshree Project (India) to help empower women economically and socially through technical and enterprise training and support. The project demonstrates that by training and certifying women in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) they are able to improve their construction knowledge and advance their careers from being a laborer to an Assistant Mason for example. This in turn increases their compensations or construction opportunities in a male dominated industry. The project also demonstrates that women have strong entrepreneurial abilities which need to just be nurtured or encouraged. Some women led social

enterprises even promoted low-carbon, climate-resilient housing solutions which are affordable and adaptable to local needs. While creating economic opportunities, the project also facilitates improving access to services and entitlements related to housing, including drinking water, sanitation, and energy.

Habitat India has also taken an innovative approach of forming “**Women’s Collectives**” in the construction space. These collectives work to persuade and motivate its members to access their rights and entitlements, and to leverage the collective’s support, experience and members to help or better negotiate with construction employers. The 3000 trained women construction workers, under Nirmanshree Project, were invited to form four Women’s collectives (one at each project district of Odisha and Maharashtra). Per collective, office bearers will be elected and trained to guide the collective and supports its members. The goal is to form groups from the village to district levels to carry and sustain the social and economic empowerment of women in the future.

7. Review of Schemes, Programmes, Policies and Laws

Major schemes, programmes, policies and laws of Government of India and Odisha related to construction workers, as indicated below, are reviewed. Government has also various schemes for combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the country. A few such schemes are, One Stop Centres (OSCs), Women Helpline, Mahila Police Volunteers, Swadhar Greh and Ujjawala Homes.

7.1 Acts to Protect Women’s Rights under Labour Laws

- Maternity Benefits Act 1961
- Equal Remuneration Act 1976
- The Orissa Building & Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment & conditions of Service) Rules 2002
- The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008 and Orissa Unorganized Workers Social Security Rules 2010
- Sexual Harassment Act 2013

7.2 Ensuring Enabling Environment for Women Entrepreneurship

Odisha has, of course, multiple policies that promote women entrepreneurship. Following few are such policies that not only facilitate with financial support (capital investment subsidy, seed capital assistance, partial reimbursement of ESI and EPF, etc) to women entrepreneurs in MSME and industrial sector, but also get them trained to build their capacity:

- Odisha Procurement Preference Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises - 2015
- Odisha Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Policy - 2016
- Odisha Industrial Policy Resolution - 2022

8. Gaps in Existing Policies and Schemes (for Women Construction Workers)

Existing Policies and Schemes that benefit women construction workers are mapped and studied in details. Gaps are identified and are categorized in three different types, such as, (a) Normative Gap, (b) Implementation Challenges/ Gap and (c) Monitoring and Information Gap. The gaps in policies and schemes are indicated below, in brief, for quick and easy references.

Sector/Area	Policies/ Schemes	Gaps in Policies/ Schemes
Normative Gap		
Skilling of Women Construction Workers	National Initiative for Promoting Upskilling of Nirman workers (NIPUN) - June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no specific focus on women construction workers. • There is no reservation for women construction workers. • The scheme is not yet started its implementation in Odisha.
	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of construction workers'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme does not focus women construction workers. • The RPL training is not sufficient for skill enhancement and getting an increase in wages. • The training is not regularly conducted in Odisha.
Availability of Work/ Work Opportunity	Buildings and Other Construction Workers (Regulation Of Employment And Conditions Of Service) Act, 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work being seasonal and subject to availability of construction materials such as cement, sand, steel, etc. as well as weather conditions. • Seasonality of construction works force women workers to have temporary jobs.
Maternity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no compensation provision for women having miscarriages during working at a construction site.
Child Care		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the worksites, there is no provision to take care of these children despite the "Building and other construction workers (regulation of employment and conditions of service) Act, 1996", that stipulates that if more than fifty female workers are employed, rooms should be provided for the use of their children. • It is difficult to find 50 women workers at a time in one construction site, particularly in rural area.
Implementation Challenges/ Gaps		
Financial Situation	Wage Code– 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though Government has fixed the wage rates, women workers generally get low wages and face exploitation at all levels.
	Occupational, Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code– 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women workers in construction industry generally experience exploitation and harassment. • Women construction workers are not provided with sanitation facilities at work site.
Violence at work site	The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although provisions are there but implementation gaps of these laws make women feel unsafe at the construction site. • There is no stringent procedure to abide the law. • There is no helpline number and quick grievance redressal mechanism to provide safety to women construction workers in remote areas.
Monitoring and Information Gap		
Social Security	Social Security Code, 2020. The Building and Other Construction Workers' Act, 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of awareness (in general or regarding specific aspects of schemes) • Despite continued attempts, people don't get registered or obtain benefits. Sometimes the middle men take money for such kind of registration. • Many workers don't reply to renew their registration when it gets expired. Because renewal process also requires same set of documents.

9. Consultation with Various Stakeholders

Multi-stakeholders' consultations were organized with a few senior and experienced subject matter experts (from government, non-government and academic institutions) to solicit necessary feedback for adding value to the policy gap analysis. Such consultations also helped analysing the gaps from various prospects and contexts to arrive at a few recommendations that can help in mainstreaming women in construction sector.

Enforcement of stringent labour law, enhancement of skills of women construction workers especially as masons and other diversified housing related activities, their assured engagement in government's construction works (e.g. PMAY), their empowerment through Women Collectives and affiliation with Mission Shakti, orientation and capacity building of front-line officials, dissemination of various knowledge products as well as creating awareness of the existing policies protecting women rights and interests, availing financial, administrative and logistic supports under MSME and industrial sector for promotion of women entrepreneurs in housing Eco-system, convergence of multi-sector and multi-stakeholders activities through multi-layer interventions of multiple departments are major inputs collected and compiled from such extensive consultative process.

10. Recommendations

- Seasonality in employment is one of the major constraints of women construction workers. Government is providing unemployment benefits under different programmes such as MGNREGA. Similar benefits may also be provided to women construction workers during the lean season. The women construction worker registered under Odisha Building and Other Construction Worker's Board may be provided a guarantee of 10 days of work in each month. In case there is unavailability of work in that locality the Government may consider providing 50% of wage rate for the ensured days of work per month. They may also be given priority in some in-door activities like painting, plumbing, electrification, interior decorations, etc.
- With increasingly shortage of land, houses are likely to be built on space (vertically) i.e., a greater number of multi -storied high-rising buildings are to come to accommodate the ever-increasing population, even in the rural areas. While machines are expected to take over the existing work opportunities, skill sets to undertake new and diversification in the type of work by women construction workers need a paradigm shift to match the demand in the emerging job market. Gender equal pay and worker safety, especially given high-rise building construction, should be ensured.
- Woman should be made aware of her fundamental and human rights and to lead a life with sense of pride, freedom and confidence. Mandatory display boards showing minimum and equal wages at work sites, transparent and digital transaction of wages to women's account, formation and engagement of women collectives to check, monitor and reduce discrepancies, if any, would help building their collective self-confidence and enhanced bargaining power.
- Welfare and legal services of Government may be extended to the women construction workers and regular follow up may also be ensured. Women Help Desks may be established in each district (or even at sub-district levels) with wider network among the local WSHGs/ women collectives, and Government institutions to actively and timely respond to issues of women workers at risk and need of support services. Stringent labour laws and gender-sensitive mechanism may be enforced for timely address the harassment related grievances of women.
- While construction companies must provide women-responsive sanitation facilities and resting places at work sites, safety measures as protection against possible occupational health hazards in the construction sector should also be made available.

- Legislation may be enacted to make it mandatory to employ a certain percentage of women masons with equal pay to men in similar roles in all Government construction works. Women construction workers may be graduated as masons after having practically trained as helpers/ workers for about a year with the male masons.
- The Panchayati Raj Department may consider starting the rural masons training keeping in view recently approved 9 lakh 60 thousand rural houses (PMAY) for Odisha by Government of India. This will not only help women to construct their own houses but also work in construction sector to earn their livelihood. Government may consider enforcement of laws for not using machines at labour intensive work sites. (Responsibility: Odisha BOCW Board)
- Apart from the earmarked/ allocated houses under PMAY of Central Government, State should consider providing interest free credit link to women, even under 'Mission Shakti', for construction of their own houses. Government may also consider giving subsidy to the most deserving (destitute) vulnerable women beneficiaries, in case of specific requirement, if any. Existing social welfare schemes may have special provision for inclusion of most vulnerable women construction workers.
- There is a need for reformulating women specific benefit packages under Building an Other Construction Worker's Board. Provisions such as compensation for miscarriage, 30 days of wage compensation during pregnancy and after delivery may be included in the benefit package.
- Most of the times, children are brought to the to the construction site by women. At the worksite, children are at risk of injury due to falling objects, heavy machinery and ditches. The Government may consider to use nearby Anganwadi Centre as a temporary creche/ day care centre for 0-6 years children of women construction workers. This will help in protecting health, nutrition and well-being of children while their mother working in the construction space.
- Government may take necessary steps to generate awareness and to ensure registration of deserving women construction worker under Building an Other Construction Worker's Board (BOCWB). (Responsibility: Government, Civil society organizations, Labour Contractors etc.)
- Safe and hygienic accommodation for the women construction workers near the construction site can be provided in the nearby Government buildings. Government may issue a directive to District collectors in this regard. (Responsibility: Odisha BOCW Board in convergence with Panchayati Raj Department)
- Orientation and capacity building of front-line officials, creating awareness on existing policies protecting women rights and interests may be ensured by Government through convergence of multiple departments.
- Women construction workers may form women collectives in the similar ways like the SHGs for enhancing their collective bargaining power. They may be imparted with soft skill training on leadership, group dynamics, effective communication and bargaining along with training on basic accounts and book keeping.
- Women Collectives may also sell construction materials for which required financial as well as backward and forward linkages may be provided by the Government. Directives/ circulars may be issued for executing agencies like BDO/ ITDA/ DRDA etc. to prioritize purchasing of branded and quality materials (cement, sand, chips metals, paints, plumbing and electric fittings, etc.) from such Women Collectives at district and Block levels. The Collective may also provide their service support (-a service market strategy) at various work sites from out of its database of skilled construction workers.

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